

LEMBECK AND BETZ EAGLE BREWERY  
164-190 Ninth Street, 515-519 Luis Munos  
Marin Boulevard  
Jersey City  
Hudson County  
New Jersey

HAER No. NJ-113

HAER  
NJ  
9-JERICI,  
20-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
Philadelphia Support Office  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
LEMBECK & BETZ EAGLE BREWERY

HAER  
NJ  
9-JERCI,  
20-  
HAER No. NJ-113

**LOCATION:** 164-190 Ninth Street, 515-519 Luis Munoz Marin Boulevard, Jersey City, Hudson County, New Jersey. USGS Jersey City, NJ Quadrangle, UTM Coordinates: 18.580960.4508840

**DATES OF CONSTRUCTION:** 1868-1870; 1888-1890; 1904; 1920

**BUILDER:** M.T. Connolly Contracting Company and other unknown contractors

**PRESENT OWNER:** City of Jersey City, New Jersey

**PRESENT USE:** Vacant and abandoned storage buildings

**SIGNIFICANCE:** The Lembeck & Betz Eagle Brewery grew over 70 years to become the fourth largest brewery in New Jersey, contributing significantly to the development of the surrounding German and Irish community and the state's brewing industry as a whole. The complex is a representative example of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century industrial architecture associated with brewing.

**PROJECT INFORMATION:** The Lembeck & Betz Eagle Brewery was recorded in October 1996 by the Cultural Resource Group of Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., East Orange, New Jersey, for the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency. The recordation was undertaken pursuant to the stipulations of the New Jersey Historic Sites Council Resolution No. 544-95, dated May 17, 1994, responding to the city of Jersey City's request to demolish the complex. Project personnel included Richard M. Casella, Senior Architectural Historian, and Rob Tucher, Senior Photographer.

## DESCRIPTION

The five surviving buildings which constitute the Lembeck & Betz Eagle Brewery complex occupy approximately 80 percent of a city block in Jersey City, bounded by Ninth Street on the south, Tenth Street on the north, Luis Munoz Marin Boulevard (formerly Henderson Street) on the east, and Manila Drive (formerly Grove Street) on the west. The buildings are all abandoned and determined unsafe due to their advanced state of structural deterioration. The complex was built in three major stages: the construction of the Original Brew House and its additions from 1868 to 1870; the construction of the Second Brew House and the Lager Brew House from 1888 to 1890; and the construction of the Bottling House and the Lager House Addition in 1904. In 1920, the brewery was converted to a cold storage plant, which resulted in substantial alterations to the interior and exterior of all of the buildings.

The exterior walls of the buildings are all of brick construction and range in height from three to eight stories. A variety of structural framing and floor systems are found in the buildings, utilizing cast iron, steel, brick, concrete, and reinforced concrete. The buildings all fall under the Renaissance Revival style as it was commonly adapted to late nineteenth-century large-scale American industrial buildings. In this case, style is principally evidenced by the remaining brickwork detailing on the walls, around the window and door openings, and at the cornices. The facades are an assemblage of Italianate and Romanesque details, applied strictly in some places and loosely in others. For example, symmetry of the fenestration often gives way to the needs of the interior floor space, resulting in conspicuously absent doors and windows. As one would expect, the facades of the earlier buildings are more heavily detailed than those of the later ones, and the various alterations and additions clearly read as utilitarian afterthoughts.

The remaining buildings within the complex include:

- A. Original Brew House : Built in 1868-1870, this three-section brick industrial building has a flat roof, a brick and stone foundation, and decorative Italianate detailing in the brickwork, especially around windows and door openings. The east and center sections are five stories; the west section is seven stories.
- B. Second Brew House : Built in 1888, this structure is a six-story, flat-roofed, brick industrial building with a brick foundation with basement, and decorative Italianate detailing in the brickwork, especially around windows and door openings.
- C. Lager Brew House : Built in 1890, this structure is a seven- and eight-story brick industrial building with a flat roof, brick foundation with basement, and decorative Italianate detailing in the brickwork, especially around windows and door openings.

D. Bottling House and Storehouse :

Built in 1904, this structure is a three-story brick industrial building with a flat roof, stepped parapet, and brick foundation with basement.

E. Lager Plant Addition :

Built in 1904, this building consists of two brick structures connected to one another and to the rear of the Lager Brew House. The south section of the building is six stories in height; the north section is five stories in height, with a two-story elevator tower above the roof in the northwest corner.

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Lembeck & Betz Eagle Steam Ale Brewery was founded by Henry F. Lembeck, a businessman from Jersey City, and John Betz, a beer brewer from New York City. Betz was the son of John F. Betz, the first German ale brewer in America, who operated the John Betz brewery in Philadelphia. It was in his father's brewery that John Betz learned his trade. Lembeck operated a grocery store in New York City which he moved to Jersey City. At some point in time, Lembeck was a sales agent of John Betz Ale and made the acquaintance of the younger John Betz. In 1868, Lembeck and Betz formed a partnership to build a brewery, which they named the Lembeck & Betz Eagle Steam Ale Brewery. In 1869, they completed construction of a four-story brick brew house on Ninth Street between Grove and Henderson Streets in Jersey City, New Jersey, and opened for business. As the business grew during the 1870s, the brew house was expanded with additions to the east and to the rear, the addition of another story to the main building, and changes to the facade. By 1879, Lembeck & Betz produced 31,532 barrels of beer, ranking it third among the 57 breweries in New Jersey which together produced nearly 520,000 barrels annually (Brooks 1984; Hopkins 1872; Muirhead 1910:89).

One of the main factors in choosing the site was the availability of good industrial land located adjacent to a branch line of the Erie Railroad which ran down Tenth Street. Bulk commodities moved by rail, and the Erie provided direct rail connections to upstate New York, the primary source of hops and malt for beer making. Naturally, the close rail line also facilitated the delivery of coal, building materials, and equipment necessary for the continued operation and expansion of the plant. The 1928 Hopkins map shows a rail siding coming down Tenth Street and entering the complex between the Bottling House and the Original Brew House. The date of the building of this siding was not determined. By 1893, Lembeck & Betz were obtaining malt via the Erie Railroad from Lembeck's malt house in Watkins, New York. The H.F. Lembeck and Co. malt house fronted on Seneca Lake and was the principal feature of the town. Following the incorporation of the brewery, the ownership of the malt houses came under the corporation. To what degree the railroad was used for transport of the finished product is not known. Presumably the majority of the beer was delivered to homes and taverns by the company's horse-drawn wagons. By 1893, the company owned 72 horses, 24 new beer trucks, and 12 ale trucks (Hopkins 1928; *The Evening News* 1893:193).

Another factor in the location of the brewery was the developing residential neighborhood of well-constructed, stylish, and affordable row houses in the immediate vicinity. The area housed a large German and Irish population who ultimately became loyal and large consumers of Lembeck & Betz's product. In the long run, many of the brewery's workers ultimately made their homes in the neighborhood, including John Betz, who lived at 230 Ninth Street. According to the 1908 city directory, Paul Kiesel, the master lager brewer for the company, brewers John Schaeffer, Phillip Schmitt, and Frank Schmitt, and a large number of other company workers all lived within a block or two of the brewery. There were numerous saloons in the neighborhood, many located on the ground floor of the tenement buildings. In 1908, the brewery operated two of its own saloons at 519 Henderson Street and 179 Tenth Street (Brooks 1984).

The success of the company led to a major expansion and building program which spanned the years 1885 through 1890. During this time, the company built the following additions to the complex: a one-story wing to the rear of the brew house (1885); a brick stable (1887) across from the brew house on the south side of Ninth Street; a new six-story brewing house (1888) adjoining the east side of the original brew house; and a new six-story lager brew house (1890) adjoining the west side of the brew house. In 1890, the company incorporated as a cooperating stock company which included the property of the malt houses at Watkins Glen, New York. Along with the incorporation, the firm offered the sale of first mortgage bonds in the amount of \$250,000 to finance the lager plant expansion and provide working capital (Brooks 1984).

In 1893, the lager brewing operation was under the supervision of master brewer Paul Kiesel, who held a diploma in brewing from a German brew school. In that year the company produced 160,000 barrels of lager beer. In 1894, the company built a three-story brick office building on the south side of Ninth Street next to the stables. Both the stable and the office building were demolished in the 1970s to make way for a housing complex which was never built (Brooks 1984; Hopkins 1908; *The Evening News* 1893:193).

John Betz died in 1901, and following Lembeck's death in 1903, ownership passed to Gustav and Otto Lembeck, who became President-Treasurer and Vice President-Secretary, respectively. In 1904, with the value of the business estimated at \$3,000,000, the Lembecks undertook another major expansion of the brewery. A three-story brick bottling and storage house was built on Ninth Street, and two additions, the first six stories and the second five, were attached to the rear of the larger house, fronting on Henderson Street. The bottling plant, the ice plant, and the cooperage were operated as separate business enterprises within the brewery complex. Production continued to grow through the first decade of the twentieth century, with the peak being reached in 1909 with an annual production of 300,000 barrels of beer. Production fell in the years leading up to Prohibition, as the temperance movement pressed for state and local restrictions and, after 1913, for an amendment to the constitution. With the passage of the 18th Amendment in January 1919, and the Volstead Act, which provided for federal enforcement of the law, nine months later, Prohibition outlawed the brewing of beer and put the company out of that business (Brooks 1984; Hopkins 1919; Muirhead 1910:89).

In 1920, the owners converted the brewery complex to a cold storage facility known as the New Jersey Refrigeration Company. The conversion required the removal of most of the brewing equipment and the alteration of much of the interior space. Cork panels were applied in thicknesses of up to 12 inches on walls, ceilings, and floors, and covered with a cement-based plaster. A concrete loading platform was added across the front of the building and a metal canopy hung above it. Two floors were added to the old brew house and the lager house at this time as well. In 1950, the name of the firm was changed to National Cold Storage. The business closed in the 1970s, and reverted to the city of Jersey City in 1979 through tax foreclosure. The buildings within the complex have stood empty since that time, suffering extensive structural damage due to the effects of weather, fire, and vandalism (Ruman 1994; Sanborn 1950).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brooks, Joseph C.

1984        *National Register Inventory Nomination Form: Lembeck & Betz Eagle Brewing Company Neighborhood.*

Fowler, L.D., Bromley and Company

1887        *Atlas of Jersey City.* Philadelphia.

Hopkins, G.M., and Company

1873        *Combined Atlas of the State of New Jersey and the County of Hudson.* Philadelphia.

1908        *Atlas of Jersey City.* Philadelphia.

1919        *Atlas of Jersey City.* Philadelphia.

1928        *Atlas of Jersey City.* Philadelphia.

Muirhead, Walter G. (editor)

1910        *Jersey City of Today.* Frank Steven, Jersey City, New Jersey.

Ruman, Helena

1994        *Condition Survey of Lembeck & Betz Eagle Brewing Company, Jersey City, New Jersey.* Report prepared for the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency by Helena Ruman Architects, Jersey City, New Jersey.

Sanborn Map Company

1950        *Insurance Maps of Hudson County, New Jersey, Jersey City*, vol. 2. Sanborn Map Company, New York.

Lembeck & Betz Eagle Brewery  
HAER No. NJ-113  
(Page 6)

*The Evening News*

1893

*The Evening News and Hoboken.* Published by the Evening News, Hoboken, New Jersey.

